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THOUGHTS ABOUT WATER.

1844

THOUGHTS ABOUT WATER.

Boston wants more water, and must have it. "*The time has arrived,*" says our worthy mayor. Such precisely has been the language of all our worthy mayors, from mayor Quincy to the present. It is not my desire to hasten the measures of our city government, but to induce them to make haste slowly. Frequent disappointments are apt to drive men to some rash conclusion at last.

Not a few, who are called to act, on the present occasion, have forgotten how thoroughly this question was vexed, in 1837–8. Facts and reasonings were then presented, which are not, like news on the stock exchange, good only while they are new; but which are quite as worthy of attention now as then.

It was ordered, in Common Council, on the 22d of this month, that commissioners should be appointed, and their compensation fixed. In my poor judgment, a careful perusal of all, that has been written and reported so elaborately already, would have been more profitable than the measure proposed. The expenditure of the city, on account of the introduction of pure water, amounted, April 16, 1838, to the sum of eighteen thousand, four hundred and ninety-nine dollars, and now exceeds twenty-two thousand.

The question, in 1838, was, whether the water should be introduced by the city, or by private companies. It was admitted then, and is admitted now, on all hands, that we want more water. But the zeal of the water party led them to certain absurd averments, respecting the well and cistern water of Boston. It was poisonous, the whole way from Winnisimmet Ferry to the fortification gates; and some of our citizens were encouraged to believe that brandy was the safer beverage, after all.

The following observations were published in 1838, as applicable to the project of that time; and their perusal may not be entirely unprofitable at the present day.

With one aqueduct in successful operation already, which, though it supplies water of the purest quality, scarcely finds one customer in every four dwellings which it passes, and with several millions of dollars invested by our citizens in wells and cisterns,—is it not manifestly the wiser course for Boston to adopt the London plan, rather than that of Philadelphia, where the hydrant was almost coeval with the foundation of the city? Is it not also the juster course, in relation to those, who, having supplied themselves at their own cost, cannot equitably be charged with the burthen of supplying their neighbors? London is supplied by eight private companies. Boston has one. Let us have another and another, as our occasions require. Then every citizen, who wants the water, can have it, on fair terms,—that is, if he will pay for it; and not by throwing a tax upon his fellow-man, who wants it not. We want enough for our present need, not a deluge, at a preposterous expense, that every lady may have a fountain, and every gentleman a hose and squirter. The waters of Spot Pond, Long Pond, and the Middlesex Canal, are before the public, for consideration. The quality of the water is of not less importance than the quantity. If the source be filthy, the less of it the better. The last of these three sources seems not to find much favor with the public. Mr. Baldwin, one of the commissioners, speaks thus of it, in his report: "I object to the color and character of the water which composes this source. Much of the water is derived from the Middlesex Canal, from the leaks and wastes on a large portion of its length. This canal is fed from Concord River, in Billerica, a large portion of whose waters lie, every year, nearly motionless, through the dog-days, steeping the grass on the Sudbury meadows, for many miles in extent."

Of the two remaining sources, Spot Pond is decidedly preferable, for our present occasion. It is higher—it is nearer—it is purer—probably, with the exception of Jamaica Pond, the purest that can be had. It is vastly less expensive, and sufficient for the city of Boston, with the co-operation of the Boston aqueduct, and our domestic resources in wells and cisterns, for a quarter of a century, at least. It is well, doubtless, to plant for posterity, but not too extensively.

Aug. 31, 1844.

WATER.

Much has been written upon the subject of introducing "*a copious supply of pure and soft water*" into the city of Boston. Some of the friends and stockholders of the Boston Aqueduct Company have stated that there are individuals, among those, who favor the $1,500,000 project, that want a job; that the water question is one, upon which Municipal elections are already made to depend; that there is a good deal of electioneering; and that the excitement of popular meetings in Faneuil Hall is not favorable to a correct decision of this very important question, which is to be settled by grave calculation, and not by loud voices, vehement gestures, or flourishes of rhetoric. Now all this may be very true, and most probably it is.

Others aver, that the Aqueduct Corporation has an obvious interest in opposing the introduction of water by the city, because, if it should be made free, their franchise would be about as valuable as that of Charlestown Bridge. In resisting the introduction of water by the city, it is therefore said that the stockholders of this company are selfish. There can be very little doubt, I think, upon this point. They are selfish, most probably, to a man: but I am afraid this term of reproach is of almost universal application. If a public officer stands pledged to any particular measure, his feelings soon become interested in its accomplishment, and he may be as selfish, for the gratification of his pride, as another for the maintenance of his possessions. If members of either board of the city government are pledged directly or indirectly to support a chief officer in a particular course, in a very little time they also become equally selfish. If I have a fine house upon some high ground, and my water is not quite so good or abundant as I could wish, I should be very likely to vote for the introduction of water; yet I should be selfish in this, no doubt, and perhaps rather unwarrantably selfish, if I were, at the same moment, an uncommonly busy and zealous advocate of this measure in the Board of Aldermen, or Common Council.

I have no belief, that the *true question*, now before the

people, can, upon any principle of common sense, ever be settled in town meetings or ward meetings, unless a vote from every citizen, that *he wishes the water to be brought in at the expense of the city*, may be rationally construed to mean, that *he will take and pay for that water.* If it be the real object to ascertain this very important fact, why may it not be the better course to apply to the citizens—not to sign a petition for a town meeting—but to *subscribe for the water?* Perhaps a more judicious course would be to deposit a book for this purpose, in some convenient place, and notify all persons, so disposed, to record therein *their promises to take and pay for the water.*

I assume it to be true, that a more copious supply of water would be a great comfort to some of our citizens. It is equally true, that a very large number do not want it, and have protested against the project, as appears by the remonstrances upon the table of the Common Council. They say they are satisfied entirely with their own wells, cisterns, and the existing aqueduct. This, however, is not likely to satisfy such persons as are actually suffering for the want of pure and soft water. It is most natural—for as I said before, we are all selfish—that the suffering party should press their individual troubles before the public, and even endeavor to persuade the community to afford them relief. But it was not quite fair, the real origin of the medical petition being duly considered, to bring down the whole faculty upon us to frighten us to death. Nor was the famous *inspection* of wells, considering the manner in which it was conducted, the most praiseworthy part of the machinery. The person employed to make this examination, went forth with a bias. He perfectly comprehended the design of his appointment, and the result was such as might have been expected. If he had supposed that his report would have been as acceptable, in the form of a careful record of all the *good wells* in the city of Boston, he would certainly have found many more of them. I am not writing in the dark. I have abundant proof of the manner, in which that *investigation* was conducted,and of the leading questions,put by the person employed.

Nevertheless, it is agreed, that pure and soft water is wanted. I speak not of the imaginary *wants* of those gentlemen, who desire the water works in every one of their apartments, high and low, which works, by the way, in our climate, can be used only for a few months in the year—nor of the imaginary *wants* of those who covet the luxury of

fountains in their yards and gardens—but of the actual wants of such as require the water for the common purposes of life, for culinary uses, for washing, bathing, drinking, &c. I by no means assume it to be true, that the great noise made about water, is to be taken as any thing like a sure standard of the existing necessity. For example, in a certain street in this city, a goodly number of occupants happen to be the tenants of sundry houses belonging to one man. These tenants are migratory and irresponsible persons. They often apply, as the superintendent tells me, for the water of the Boston Aqueduct, which passes through the street referred to. The superintendent replies—"you are here to-day and gone to-morrow; I cannot trust you; but you shall have the water if your landlord, Mr. A. B. will become responsible, which he refuses!" Now there is no person more clamorous than Mr. A. B. for what?—Not for pure water, but for pure water *at the expense of the city;* a phrase, which is misleading thousands into the belief, that they are to have the water from the very moment of its introduction, for nothing, and who are therefore easily induced to vote for the project.

How shall all *reasonable* demands for water be satisfied? Not surely in the superlatively foolish and intemperate spirit, which has dictated the paragraphs of certain writers, "*we will have it!*" The idea of coercing entire boards of council to act contrarily to their consciences, by the force of an *instructing* power, presumed to reside in an excited and multitudinous body, is the very maximum of jacobinical absurdity.

How shall the *reasonable* demand for water in this city be supplied? Is it just and right that water should be supplied *at the expense of the city?* If we were now assembling upon this peninsula for the first time, and proposing to build a city, the suggestion would come with a better grace. Could we calculate even now, with any *reasonable degree of certainty*, that a sufficient number of customers would take and *pay* for the water, to meet the amount of interest on cost, and the expense of superintendent, treasurer, clerk and subaltern operatives, there would be nothing so very enormous in the proposal. But how can we arrive at this *reasonable degree of certainty?* By calling on the citizens to vote in wards, in favor of bringing in soft water *at the expense of the city?*

Let us translate these words—*at the expense of the city*—into English. Do they mean, that the city shall pay the cost of the works, and the citizens shall pay the interest

thereon in the form of a water tax? Did the voters in the affirmative, on Monday last, so understand these words? Did the owner of some "*twenty houses without wells,*" who pledged himself to bring his tenants to the polls to vote for the measure, so understand these words? Did his tenants themselves so understand these words? Let us suppose that they did—that they are willing to pay—that they are able to pay. Let us be exceedingly liberal in our suppositions—let us suppose that every voter, on Monday last, in favor of the measure, was the head of a family, and would be a customer to the proposed aqueduct, which must, however, be very far from the truth. What then? *Twenty-five hundred* customers would scarcely pay the interest on the outlay, even if that outlay should not exceed $1,500,000, unless each paid an uncomfortable price for the water, as any one's arithmetic will show.

These words, *at the expense of the city*, are not thus to be translated. Deduct from the 2500 voters, in favor of the measure, those, who are not heads of families, servants, who have voted to please their masters, journeymen mechanics, who have voted to please their employers, and a portion of the mass who look for employment in some one or other department, should the *project* go forward,—and how many will remain to pay for this *soft water*, which will prove the *hardest* water, that was ever brought into this or any other city, in a pecuniary sense?

But we are not at all in the condition supposed, in the first paragraph of this communication. We are not commencing a city *de novo*. We have, *as individuals*, expended an immense amount of money already, for our wells and cisterns. We have also an aqueduct, whose capabilities it is for the interest of the water party to depreciate, and which supplies nearly 1500 families, and, as Mr. Baldwin states in his report, can supply very many more, with the purest water. Under this condition of things, is it a righteous application of the golden rule, to compel a very large number of our citizens, who solemnly aver that they do not want this water, and that they have provided themselves already, at their own cost and charge, with good and sufficient wells and cisterns,—to compel *them* to pay for this project, that *other* men may have water at *their* expense? The analogy attempted to be sustained between the condition of Philadelphia and Boston, cannot be supported upon any principle. The aqueduct there was not offered to a city, provided, in a good degree,

already, with wells and cisterns, and having an aqueduct in operation at the time, supplying fifteen hundred families, and prevented from essentially increasing its supply, only by a perpetual fear of being ruined by the city itself. The expectation of gathering 12,000 customers here, with *our* population, because,after so very many years,the Philadelphians have gathered 13,000 customers with *their* population, is hardly worthy the reputation of three well grown and well paid commissioners.

How shall the *reasonable* demand for pure water in the city be satisfied? What is the actual extent of that *reasonable* demand? The South Cove, Mill Pond, and Railroad Corporations demand this water, to enable them to augment the profit of their several speculations. Those inhabitants whose well water is bad in quality or insufficient in quantity, demand this water. Those, who, not content with the amount commonly consumed, insist on a *copious* supply, twenty-seven and one-half gallons, at least, *per diem*, for every inhabitant, not excepting even those who solemnly declare that they have an abundance already, demand this water. Which of these demands are *reasonable*, and which are *unreasonable?*

We steadily deny that any demand for this water is a *reasonable* demand, unless the demandant will pledge himself to pay the water rent, whatever that may be. Of the 2500 who voted *for* water, we do not believe that 1250 are ready to pledge themselves. Let us, however, assume it to be true, that every one of these 2500 voters will pledge himself accordingly. Let us also assume it to be true, and assuredly we may, that those 1600 individuals who voted *against* this water, have enough, and good enough, already. Let us suppose that the actual condition of public sentiment is truly represented by this vote. Here, then, is a surplus of 44,000 gallons, *per diem*, being the proportion of 27 1-2 each, to 1600 citizens, which these 1600 citizens do not want, and will not receive. Add this amount of 44,000 gallons to 68,750 gallons, the proportion, at 27 1-2 gallons each, *per diem*, to 2500 customers, and we have an aggregate of 112,750 gallons of water. Which, if used at all, must be used by these 2500 customers, since the other 1600 will have nothing to do with it. Now, in this ratio, every old lady and every nursing baby in the city will have the luxury of 45 1-10 gallons per diem,—a *copious* supply, beyond all doubt.

But we affirm, that, as 16 is to 25, so is *not* the proportion of those, who do not want the water, to those, who will take it and pay for it. As a stimulus to the water party, the

editor of the Daily Advertiser, on the morning of the ward meeting, published an editorial proclamation of considerable length, in which he observes, "*if they do not vote for it, on such an appeal as this, the inference will be a fair one that the water is not wanted.*" Is then the casting of 2500 votes in favor of this measure, "*after such an appeal as this,*" and of which 2500 votes, as we have already stated our firm belief, not 1250 were cast by men, who would agree to pay for the water,—is the casting of these 2500 votes, after such electioneering and caucussing, to settle this question for 80,000 inhabitants? Where were those 12,500 customers, who were so eager for this water? The gentleman who decided for the Common Council, that they would *assume the responsibility* of this costly undertaking, with a majority of one only, will, perhaps, consider it perfectly justifiable that 2500 voters should bind this burthen upon the shoulders of 1600 others, and upon the whole population, and compel them to bear it, when the *whole* advantage is to be reaped by this small compelling party. If this be a sample of equity in the city of Boston, we have no accurate conception of gross injustice under a despotic government.

We have endeavored to exhibit several reasons why the existing demand for water should *not* be satisfied at the expense of the city. We have a few words more to say upon this point. The editor of the Daily Advertiser observes, in his paper of April 2,—"*There is a peculiar propriety in referring a question of this sort to the suffrages of the citizens.*" We are utterly at a loss to discover wherein this *peculiar propriety* consists. To our apprehension the very reverse of Mr. Hale's opinion appears to be the truth. It seems to be a question, in its original state, which might with *singular propriety* have been referred to the calm, unbiased decision of Boards of Councils: in its present state, and when highly improper means have been employed to inflame the public mind, it is not easy to perceive the *singular propriety* of referring this question to the suffrages of the citizens.

A very considerable number of those opposed to this water project, are non-residents; yet by them a very large proportion of the city taxes is paid. They have a deep interest at stake, yet they have no voice in this matter at the polls. In 1836, nearly $18,000 of the year's tax were levied upon the real estate owned and represented by females. A much larger amount was levied upon the real estate of non-residents,

and various corporations. A large amount of the public tax must always fall upon executors, trustees and guardians, who, though some of them may vote, in regard to their own respective interests, can exercise no right of suffrage on behalf of those minors and other persons, the taxes upon whose property they are bound to pay.

Let us now examine the petitions and remonstrances, published by the City Council, in Document No. 9, of the papers relating to the introduction of pure water. They are eight in number, four in favor of the project, and four against it.

The reckless facility, with which men lend their names upon occasions of this nature, where there is no obligation to pay money, is proverbial. It will not be an easy matter to furnish an illustration of this truth, more remarkable than that, which we are about to exhibit.

In the year 1837, a pamphlet was published, by order of the Common Council, entitled, "*List of Persons, Co-partnerships, and Corporations, who were taxed twenty-five dollars and upwards, in the City of Boston, in the year* 1836." To this pamphlet we shall refer, as *the tax-book*. It is just to remark, that the remonstrances were gotten up in some haste, and after it was discovered that petitions in favor of the project were already in circulation. The first petition commences with the name of Joseph Tilden. This is not the present Actuary of the M. H. L. Insurance Company, as some persons have supposed. That gentleman is opposed to the water project, and voted against it at the polls. Joseph Tilden, whose name is at the head of this first petition, was taxed, in 1836, on real estate, $13 30. Upon this petition, the whole number of names is 222. Upon *the tax-book*, published by the Council, no more than 28 can be found of these 222 who are taxed for any real estate. In addition to the 28, a small personal tax is set against the names of seven others. The names of 187 of these 222 do not appear in *the tax-book*. The spirit, in which this project has been urged forward, may be gathered, in some degree, from the style, in which several of these 222 petitioners have presented their wishes: take one or two examples—"*L. Stimson, jun. goes the death for Long Pond.*" —"*W. C. Cary goes the death for Long Pond.*" The whole amount set against the names of those 28, who, according to *the tax-book*, are taxed on real estate, is $1830 45. One single inhabitant appears by *the tax-book*, to have been taxed, in the same year, for real and personal estate, $2132 95,

more than these 222 petitioners, and on his real estate alone $565 45 more than their whole body.

The second petition commences with the name of Ichabod Macomber. This petition has 243 signatures. Of this number 179 do not appear on *the tax-book*, as having been taxed, for any real estate, in 1836. Seventeen of these 179 appear to have paid a small personal tax. The remaining 162 cannot be found upon *the tax-book*. Of the whole 243, 64 pay $5034 75 on real estate, being $782 40 less than the amount of taxes on real estate, set against the names of four citizens of Boston in 1836. On this petition are the names of some, who have subscribed other petitions. We notice on this *petition*, the name of Jeremiah Fitch. The name of the same individual may be found on one of the *remonstrances*.

The third petition commences with the name of William Appleton. Upon this petition, after the very third name, there is a sad falling into nought. The conclusion of this petition is truly amusing—"LET THE THING BE DONE," in capital letters, certainly bears the appearance of a fiat. This petition has one hundred and forty-one signatures. One hundred and nine appear not on *the tax-book* as taxed in 1836, for any real estate. Two of these one hundred and nine were taxed a low personal tax. The remaining one hundred and seven are not named on *the tax-book*. Of the one hundred and forty-one,32 were taxed $4,316 50 on real estate.

The fourth petition commences with the name of I. F. Curtis. It numbers one hundred and eighteen signatures. Of this number, one hundred and four do not appear in *the tax-book*, as taxed for either real or personal estate, in 1836. Of the whole number, one hundred and eighteen, fourteen appear on *the tax-book*, as taxed for real estate, $933 85.

The whole amount taxed on real estate to all the petitioners, upon these four petitions, in 1836, was $10,468 55, from which we deduct the tax on real estate set down to Mr. Otis, now a remonstrant, though one of the petitioners, and the amount remaining will be $9,045 40.

The first remonstrance is from David Ellis and 163 others. Of the whole number, sixty-two do not appear upon *the tax-book* for 1836. The amount of taxes on real estate in 1836, set against the names of one hundred and one, is $17,360 18.

The second remonstrance is from Daniel Dickenson and one hundred and thirty-four others. Of these, one hundred and thirteen do not appear upon *the tax-book*. Twenty-one were taxed on real estate in 1836, $1,482 55.

The third remonstrance is from James B. Richardson and fifty-five others. Of these, thirty-six do not appear upon *the tax book*. Nineteen were taxed on real estate, in 1836, $1413 45.

The fourth remonstrance is from Noah Lincoln and one hundred and sixty-two others. Of these, one hundred and twenty-three do not appear upon *the tax-book*. Forty were taxed on real estate, in 1836, $4,447 95.

The taxes on real estate set against the names of these five hundred and eighteen remonstrants in *the tax-book*, for 1836, amount to the sum of $24,704 13. Add the tax on real estate, for that year, set against the name of the Hon. H. G. Otis, $1,422 15, and the total amount is $26,126 28. The taxes on real estate set against the names of seven hundred and twenty-three petitioners, in *the tax-book*, for 1836, amount to the sum of $9,045 40.

It has been boldly and frequently asserted, that the whole opposition to this water project was made by a few "*rich capitalists;*" yet of these five hundred and eighteen remonstrants, three hundred and thirty-four, so far from being *rich capitalists*, do not even appear upon *the tax-book* for 1836, containing the names of all persons taxed $25 and upwards. The truth is this:—These remonstrants have supplied themselves with water at their own charge, and are unwilling to bear the cost of supplying it to others. They are entirely opposed to the application of Agrarian principles in this city, and they believe there is less to be apprehended from a direct, brazen-faced demand for a community of all property, than from a subtle and insidious application of the very same principles, whereby, under the guise of suffrage at the polls, one citizen may vote himself soft bread or soft water, at the expense of another.

Can it be true that the water project will cost no more than $1,500,000? Have not the commissioners greatly underrated the damages? It seems the Standing Committee think they have. Are there not some who silently hope that the project will be undertaken, intending to sell their rights and privileges as dearly as possible? Such is believed to be the fact. Suppose the cost to be accurately stated; can 12,500 customers be found at $6 per head, or 6,250 at $12 per head, to meet the interest at 5 per cent on the cost? The Boston Aqueduct is said to have been forty years in operation, and has not obtained 1500 customers. Its main is said to pass the dwellings of 5,800 families, of which 4,350 do not apply for the water. This important fact, while it goes to prove any thing rather than such an almost universal

necessity for water, as has been declared to exist, certainly does not strengthen the prophecy of the water commissioners, that 12,500 customers can be gathered to pay for it. If this project should be accomplished, will the wells and cisterns in this city be abandoned, as it were, by common consent? Certainly not, unless the water shall be made free, nor even then; for there are many, who will not drink the aqueduct water when offered them for nothing. Will the Boston Aqueduct suspend its operations, should this new project be accomplished? Certainly not. So long as any price shall be demanded by the city, so long that corporation will continue to offer a purer water than the city can produce from either of its contemplated sources, at the very same price. The customers of the Boston Aqueduct, and those citizens, who are already sufficiently provided with wells and cisterns, form an aggregate that must manifestly diminish the number of those, upon whom the commissioners appear to have relied for the payment of the water tax. To us it seems extraordinary that three intelligent individuals should have entirely overlooked such considerations as these.

The interest on cost is not the only thing to be provided for. This magnificent project, beheld only as yet in the distance, has already cost the city of Boston the sum of $18,499,83. This grand aqueduct will not be able to manage itself. It must have its superintendent, its treasurer, its collectors, its clerks, and sundry subaltern operatives, and they must be paid. We do not assume it to be true, although it is not deemed an extravagant assumption by several intelligent calculators, that the execution of this project will cost $5,000,000. We truly believe $3,000,000 by no means an extravagant estimate. The interest on this amount, at 5 per cent., will be $150,000 per annum. Fifteen thousand dollars per annum is a very modest allowance for compensation and contingencies. Here, then, is an annual debt, to be met by the city, of $165,000. Can any reflecting individual, who duly weighs the facts which we have stated,—that a large number will, undoubtedly, adhere to the existing aqueduct; and that a large number will use no other water than that of their own wells and cisterns; and that the existing aqueduct has been forty years employed in gathering less than 1,500 customers,—can any reflecting individual believe that the proposed aqueduct will be able to obtain 5,000 customers in the space of ten years? Such a condition of things would be rather onerous, as the water tax would be

$33 per annum to each one, beside the original cost and occasional reparation of fixtures. Let us presume that each of these 5,000 customers will pay the *highest* price charged by the existing aqueduct to private families, or $12. We shall then have an income of $60,000, leaving an excess, to be provided for by the city, of $105,000 per annum. If, however, we calculated only upon the water rent, proposed by the commissioners, "*an average rent of* $6 *to each tenant,*" then we shall have an income of $30,000 per annum, leaving an excess of annual debt, to be provided for by the city, of $135,000.

It must be apparent, to every thinking man, that this very condition of things will tend to abolish the water tax entirely, and make the water as much the property of every citizen as the highway. The argument will, probably, not vary materially from this:—Our commissioners have led us into a prodigious mistake. It is now too late to correct it. We have laid out our millions, and we have gotten "*the whistle.*" It is not the profitable thing we had anticipated. A few gentlemen upon the highlands are very much delighted, beyond all doubt. To their fine houses they have now the long-coveted addition of pure and soft water in abundance. They are able and willing to bear such portion of the burthen as may be assessed to them, not only in the shape of a water rent, but *their proportion* of the increased city tax. Here is a vast superfluity of water. The profit we derive from the water rent is too insignificant to operate upon "our high-minded citizens," as an argument against making this aqueduct free. Away, then, with this odious water tax. If the city authorities demur, we will serve "*a requisition*" upon them, for the use of Faneuil Hall, and there, with the assistance of one or two idle bankrupts, having no lawful employment of their own, and whom, according to the Spanish proverb, twenty devils are said to employ, we will "*instruct*" them, until they perfectly comprehend the duty of submission to the will of a highly excited and multitudinous assembly.

Certain individuals were illy provided with water, in respect to its quality or quantity, particularly upon, and in the vicinity of, Beacon Hill. This comparatively small body, gave, as we believe, the first impulse. Adscititious strength has been gathered from various sources. The rich have called to their assistance the clamors of the poor; and that they might participate in this hue and cry, with some little appearance of reason, the city authorities have suffered a

goodly number of excellent public wells and pumps to be filled up and abolished. This certainly was not so very fatherly; but the water project was gathering strength from year to year; and the abandonment of these public wells contributed to increase the apparent necessity for this "*copious supply of pure and soft water.*" It is quite natural, that the Mayor of a city, having one eye upon the public weal, should turn the other occasionally upon his own glory. One gentleman associates his name with a splendid market-house, and another would be the founder of an aqueduct. So the water project gathers its support from the necessities of some and the ambition of others. In this stage of the affair, an eminent physician, within the high district, is besought to petition for water. The memorial is so contrived as to operate upon the sensibilities and awaken the fears of every nervous woman in the city, who operates in turn, upon a father, or a brother, or a husband. Water, which has been drunken with perfect satisfaction, for many generations, and to a good old age, becomes suddenly offensive to the smell and taste, and old ladies put on their spectacles and look for eels. In the mean time the petition from the faculty, having been signed by one or two eminent physicians, the others follow, as inevitably, as wave follows wave upon the ocean. We are all just as familiar with this process, as with that, whereby, when we pull at the main end of a rope the residue of the coil must follow. The project becomes the town talk. As a corroborative for the doctors, a *trusty* agent is employed, by *the city government*, who are by this time, sufficiently imbued with the water mania. He goes forth to investigate the character of the wells in the city; not surely to contradict the opinions of the faculty! This agent understood his business, and he accomplished it to the satisfaction of his employers. The practicability of the project soon becomes so apparent, that a very numerous body of artizans, who hope, in one way and another, to be employed in its execution, join the popular cry of "*water*"—"*pure water*"—"*a copious supply of pure and soft water,*" of whom many are utterly ignorant of the real merits of the question, and care nothing for the consequences. Then follows the practice, which is equally graceless in both parties, of exacting from candidates for public office specific pledges by the people, for the execution of particular measures, whereby the public functionary surrenders the exercise of his reasoning powers, and becomes a popular machine. Aldermen and common

councilmen are elected, not to act according to reason and conscience, but to carry a point—to forget alike the dignity and the impartiality, which belong to their station, *and openly to electioneer*, in furtherance of a measure, which it is their solemn duty to decide *in the most calm and unbiased manner*.

We have already adverted to the influence exerted by the public journals of this city, in promoting the execution of this project. Those which have not afforded their zealous and even feverish co-operation, appear to have been, like the imaginary town pump, described by the orator in Faneuil Hall—chained up. Not satisfied with all ordinary help, the movers in this matter have thought proper to hitch on the Temperance cause, at the head of their team. Now we profess to be friends of temperance. We are not, however, so very *ardent* in the cause as those who have the consummate impudence to call themselves the "*ardent friends of temperance*," and prate of pure and soft water, while every syllable they utter is accompanied with the compound stench of brandy and tobacco. We are, *in theory and practice*, friends of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, and desire, by all suitable means, to promote this holy cause of temperance. Yet, in the most direct and ample manner, we enter our protest against this preposterous attempt to associate the temperance cause with the pure and soft water project. Let the temperance cause stand alone, upon its individual merits. Suffer it, at no time, to be mingled with questions of slavery or anti-slavery, or municipal projects, or other extraneous matter. How little influence has the quality of water, upon the brandy drinker's habits! He may assign it as an excuse, and when the city shall have removed this excuse, at the cost of millions, he will readily find another. The brandy drinker's arguments are drawn, not from the brain, but from the stomach and pylorus. By recognizing such a pretence, as a legitimate apology, we authorize the tippler to tipple on, till we find him a copious supply of pure and soft water, which, after all, will be found not so entirely to his taste, as to satisfy his peculiar appetite without the alcoholic corrective. The immorality of the use and traffic is an all-sufficient argument. We shall do no possible good and much harm to the cause of temperance, by permitting moderate drinkers to imagine, for one moment, that they are justifiable in their attempts to improve bad water by the addition of rank poison. This exceedingly foolish association of the water project and the temperance cause, is probably attributable to some well

intending friends, who occasionally overburthen us with help, who have not studied this all-important subject in its various relations, and whose zeal surpasseth their knowledge.

The fallacy of all vast estimates for great public works, has been proverbial for ages. Two individuals, upon whose skill and accuracy great reliance was placed, were employed to estimate the Croton works. They differed only to the extent of $100,000, a slight variation in a matter of so much importance; the estimate of one being $4,000,000, and of the other $4,100,000. Yet these shrewd calculators fell below the cost $9,000,000; $13,000,000 having been expended on the project.

The public are not generally aware of the causes, which have operated to delay the completion of the Spot Pond project. The Stockholders are personally liable for the debts of the company; and the productiveness of the stock is, with some, a matter of doubt. An effort was made, at the last session of the Legislature, to remove this restriction, but in vain. It is confidently believed by some persons, that, were it removed, the stock would be taken up, without delay. This incumbrance seems not, however, to have influenced some of our shrewdest capitalists, who have already subscribed for the stock. A little reflection has shown them, I presume, that the capital will not be very liable to accident, after it shall have been buried, as it speedily will be, under ground. This is not a manufacturing nor trading corporation. Its capital is not liable to frequent re-investment. A vigilant committee will see that the capital is inhumated, and it is not easy to perceive in what manner, even a corrupt board of directors, can conjure it back again for evil purposes. The income will pass into the hands of the treasurer, and be secured to the stockholders, by virtue of his bonds. The liability appears to me of very little importance.

It has been suggested, that the proprietors of the Boston aqueduct have as fair means for judging of the profitable character of this species of property as any persons whatever. The names of several of those proprietors appear upon the subscription paper. This fact also shows, that the existing corporation is very far from presenting any opposition to the creation of another; unless to one, by whose unwieldy bulk it might be annihilated; and whose enormous cost and unproductiveness would ultimately lead to making it absolutely free, entailing upon the city an indebtedness, which might remain for ages.

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